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CHAPTER 5

Job as Prototype of Dying and Rising Israel

KATHRYN SCHIFFERDECKER

The election of Israel is a theme that pervades the Hebrew Bible, occasioning consternation on the part of many a modern reader. In the Pentateuch course that I teach nearly every semester (a required course for all first-year students at my seminary), we encounter the scandal of election first in the story of Cain and Abel. Why, my students wonder, would God choose Abel's sacrifice over Cain's? Why would God—the God who created everyone in the divine image—play favorites?

The perceived problem is only amplified when we get to the election of Abram just a few chapters later in Gen 12. In this story the "problem" of election is mitigated somewhat by the closing statement of God's call to the patriarch: "Through you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3b).[1] Abraham, in a phrase popular in American Christian circles, is "blessed to be a blessing." He is indeed

chosen by God, but his election is primarily for the purpose of being a conduit of blessing for the entire world. Such an understanding of Abraham's election serves to moderate the scandal of election for my students, and there is indeed biblical warrant for such an understanding.[2] Abraham and Israel have a special responsibility to be bearers of God's blessings to the world. As other scholars have argued, however, Abraham's (and Israel's) election cannot be reduced simply to its instrumental function. Jon Levenson puts it this way:

> There is, then, a duality in the Bible's concept of election. On the one hand, election is at times articulated in terms of larger purposes that it is to serve, and, of necessity, those purposes extend beyond the confines of the chosen people. On the other hand, God bears with Israel even when it fails in its mission . . . The specialness of Israel is neither altogether self-sufficient nor altogether instrumental.[3]

In other words, to say that Abraham (or Israel) is "blessed to be a blessing" is most certainly true, but it is not the whole story. There is something irreducibly distinctive about the election of Israel, something that has more to do with God's love for Israel than with Israel's role vis-à-vis other nations.[4]

Of course, as one travels through Genesis the "problem" of election becomes more acute. Why Isaac and not Ishmael? Why Jacob and not Esau? Why is Joseph singled out for special favor by his father and by God? What do we (self-proclaimed enlightened and egalitarian) readers do with these texts?

Even as my students struggle with these questions, they also begin to notice something else about these stories; that is, they notice that it is not an easy thing to be one of the elect. In fact, it may not even be, on the face of it, a *desirable* thing to be one of the elect.

The examples abound, beginning in Genesis: Abel is killed by his own brother; Abraham and Sarah all but give up hope of having a child; Isaac is nearly sacrificed by his God-fearing father; Jacob is in exile for twenty years from his homeland and suffers the loss of his beloved son; Joseph himself is sold into slavery by his jealous brothers and is in exile for all his adult life. And none of the patriarchs ever really possess the land promised to Abraham in Gen 12. These stories of the patriarchs

and matriarchs of Israel adumbrate what the people of Israel themselves will go through: slavery, hostility from the nonelect, exile, and diaspora. It is not an easy thing to be chosen.

These stories in Genesis participate in what Levenson describes as "the ancient, protean, and strangely resilient story of the death and resurrection of the beloved son."[5] Each of the beloved sons in Genesis—Abel, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph—goes through a near death and resurrection.[6] Being the beloved, chosen son is not an easy thing: "The beloved son is marked for both exaltation and humiliation. In his life the two are seldom far apart."[7] In this movement of death and resurrection, the beloved sons of Israel's foundational narratives prefigure what the nation itself will be, "the ever-dying, ever-reviving people of Israel."[8] Indeed, it is Israel's election as the "firstborn" of God (Exod 4:22; cf. Jer 31:9) that marks it for both humiliation and exaltation: "The story of the humiliation and exaltation of the beloved son reverberates throughout the Bible because it is the story of the people about whom and to whom it is told. It is the story of Israel the beloved son, the firstborn of God."[9]

As Levenson has so clearly demonstrated, this story of the death and resurrection of the beloved son, of Israel itself, permeates the Hebrew Bible and is closely connected with the theology of election. One sees the story played out communally particularly in those two momentous events in Israel's salvation history: the exodus and the Babylonian exile, the latter spoken of in language reminiscent of the former,[10] and both spoken of in terms of election theology.[11] In both instances, Israel/Judah comes back to life from an experience of near annihilation through the miraculous intervention of God. The exodus and the exile describe the humiliation and the exaltation of God's beloved, a movement that accompanies the election of Israel throughout the Bible. We see this movement from death to life also, however, in biblical texts which do not speak explicitly of the election of Israel or of anything specifically Israelite. In this latter category, the preeminent example is the book of Job.

JOB THE RIGHTEOUS GENTILE

It may seem odd to speak about Job in a collection of essays about the election of Israel. Job is, after all, part of the corpus of biblical Wisdom

literature, which is decidedly nonnationalistic. The book never speaks of Israel's election or, indeed, of Israel. Moberly's comment about Job may be taken as characteristic of most scholars' thinking on the matter: "*Job stands outside the specific context of God's election of Israel,* and so seems to represent something about humanity as such which may be valid independently of God's special revelation to Israel (although it is Israel which recognizes and characterizes it)."[12]

There is warrant for characterizing Job as standing "outside the specific context of God's election of Israel." Job is not designated an Israelite. In fact, he is introduced as "greater than all the sons of the East" or perhaps "the greatest of all the sons of the East" (Job 1:3).[13] His homeland, Uz, is connected in other biblical passages with the land and people of Edom.[14] In fact, the LXX book of Job ends with a genealogy that identifies Job with the Jobab of Gen 36:33–34, an Edomite king and descendant of Esau.[15]

The book of Job shows no concern with the particular events, people, and places associated with Israel. There is no mention of Abraham (or any of the patriarchs or matriarchs) in Job. There is no mention in the book of the exodus, Sinai, the temple, or the land of Israel itself. The names for God which populate the poetic core of the book—El, Eloah, Elohim, and Shaddai—are not the covenant name of God, YHWH, peculiar to the revelation to Israel.

For all these reasons, the person of Job is often understood by both ancient and modern commentators as an exemplar of the "righteous Gentile." Patristic biblical exegetes understood him as such, and claimed him as a sort of proto-Christian: one who, though outside the covenant with Israel, had faith in God and was counted righteous.[16] Gregory the Great, in his *Moralia on Job,* writes: "It is not without cause that the life of a just pagan is set before us as a model side by side with the life of the Israelites. Our Savior, coming for the redemption of Jews and Gentiles, willed also to be foretold by the voices of Jews and Gentiles."[17]

Many rabbinic commentators also identified Job as a Gentile, though whether he was righteous or not was a matter of debate. One tradition makes Job a Canaanite and places him in the land of Canaan at the time of the spies sent by Moses (Num 13).[18] Other rabbis count Job, along with Jethro and Balaam, as one of Pharaoh's counselors.[19] Still others list him as one of seven Gentile prophets who prophesied to the nations before the Torah was given to Israel.[20]

In contrast to the patristic writers and the rabbis cited above, there is in rabbinic commentary on Job a strong minority opinion that identifies him as an Israelite. Rabbi Johanan and Rabbi Eleazar both argue that Job was one of the people who returned from the Babylonian exile.[21] Against the idea that Job was a Gentile prophet, it is argued that he was instead an Israelite who prophesied *to* the Gentiles.[22] Rabbi Johanan, after reading the book of Job, comments: "Blessed is he who was brought up in the Torah and who has given delight to his Maker."[23]

The disagreements between rabbinic writers about Job's identity are possible because of the ambiguities in the book of Job itself. Job is not identified as an Israelite. Nor is he identified as a non-Israelite. Though the lack of references in the book to anything specifically Israelite would seem to suggest that Job is a Gentile, there are facets of his story that point to his identification as one of the elect. The first of these is the strong resemblance of Job to the patriarchs of Genesis.

JOB THE PATRIARCH

It has long been noticed that the Job of the prologue and the epilogue bears a striking resemblance to the patriarchs of Genesis. Several rabbinic traditions compare Job with Abraham, some favorably, some unfavorably. One tradition compares God's love for Job with God's love for Abraham.[24] Another maintains that if Job had not complained, his name would have been included in the daily prayers along with the names of the patriarchs: "If he [Job] had not cried out, as we now say in the *Tefillah,* 'God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob,' we would also say, 'and God of Job.'"[25]

Some rabbinic traditions place Job in the time of Abraham.[26] Others contend that Job married Dinah, Jacob's daughter.[27] As noted above, the LXX book of Job ends with a genealogy that identifies Job as a grandson of Esau, a direct descendant of Abraham. The pseudepigraphical *Testament of Job* and most of the patristic writers also hold to this tradition.[28]

These interpreters of the book noticed what most modern commentators also note—the many connections between the story of Job

and the stories of the Israelite patriarchs.[29] Job's wealth of flocks and herds is reminiscent of that of the patriarchs (Gen 26:13–14/Job 1:3; Gen 30:29–30/Job 1:10). So is his wealth of children reminiscent of Jacob's (Job 1:2). The currency in Job is the *qĕśîṭâ* (Job 42:11), which is mentioned nowhere else in the Hebrew Bible except in stories about Jacob (Gen 33:19; Josh 24:32). The death of Job is described in the same terms as the deaths of Abraham and Isaac. All three patriarchs die *zāqēn ûśĕbaʿ yāmîm*, "old and full of days" (Gen 25:8, 35:29; Job 42:17).[30] Both Abraham and Job are described as God-fearers (Gen 22:12; Job 1:1).[31] Both Jacob and Job are designated *tām*, "blameless, wholehearted" (Gen 25:27; Job 1:1, 8; 2:3).[32] Job, like the patriarchs, acts as a priest (Gen 12:7, 13:18, 22:13, 26:25, 31:54, 35:14; Job 1:5, 42:8–9), even praying, like Abraham, for his enemies (Gen 20:7, 17; Job 42:8–9). Finally, two of the most common names for God used in the book of Job—El and Shaddai—are associated with the patriarchal narratives: "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as El Shaddai, but by my name YHWH I did not make myself known to them" (Exod 6:3).[33]

The author of the book of Job places his protagonist in the time and circumstances of the Israelite patriarchs, using allusive language and images to connect his story to those of Genesis. So evocative was this characterization that at least one Second Temple Jewish interpreter read the Genesis narratives in light of the later narrative of Job.[34] The author of *Jubilees* retells the story of the Akedah in Gen 22 by referring to the prologue of the book of Job.[35] Why would God demand from Abraham the terrible sacrifice of his son? Because Prince Mastema—the Satan figure in *Jubilees*—places doubts in God's mind, claiming that Abraham loves Isaac more than he loves God. Abraham, like Job, passes the test and Mastema is put to shame. In both cases, God tests his faithful servants because of the assertions of the Accuser against them, and God rewards them when they prove the Accuser wrong.

The connection that *Jubilees* draws between Abraham and Job underscores not only the patriarchal characterization of the latter, but also a deeper correlation between the stories of the two men. Namely, both Abraham and Job are chosen by God, and both experience great suffering precisely because of that election.

JOB THE ELECT

To call Job one of the elect is not to circumvent the debate about whether he is to be identified as an Israelite or not. It is to assert, however, that he is described in terms reminiscent of Israel's own election.

At the very beginning of the book of Job, we are introduced to Job as a man "whole-hearted and upright, one who feared God and turned from evil" (Job 1:1). He is an exemplary figure even by God's own reckoning, as we learn a few verses later: "YHWH said to the Satan, 'Have you noticed my servant Job? There is no one like him on earth, a man whole-hearted and upright, one who fears God and turns from evil'" (Job 1:8, 2:3).

This commendation of Job by God is remarkable for several reasons. First, it must be noted that the deity who speaks here is identified as YHWH, the God of Israel. We have had occasion to note above that Job and his companions in the dialogue do not use this covenant name of God.[36] Yet here, at the very beginning of the book, we find out that the God who acts in the book of Job is none other than the God of the patriarchs, the God known by his people as YHWH. The deity is so named several times in the prologue, the divine speeches, and the epilogue of Job. Whether Job is an Israelite is unclear. What is clear is that he is in relationship with the God of Israel.

Another remarkable thing about this passage is the designation of Job by God as "my servant" (*ʿabdi*). YHWH repeatedly calls Job "my servant" to the Satan and to Job's three companions (Job 1:8, 2:3, 42:7–8), three times in one verse alone (42:8), as if to emphasize Job's special relationship with God. The phrase "my servant(s)" in the mouth of God is not particularly rare in the Hebrew Bible; it occurs several dozen times. In all but one case, however, the people so designated are the elect, either the people of Israel themselves, or specific individuals from Israel: Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Zerubbabel, the prophets, the Davidic king.[37] The only exception to this rule is the designation by God of Nebuchadnezzar as "my servant" in Jeremiah, a role the Babylonian king is given not because he is one of the elect, but because God is using him as an instrument to punish the elect (Jer 25:9, 27:6, 43:10). Once he fulfills that role, God will punish him in turn (Jer 25:12–14).

The divine commendation of someone as "my servant" occurs several times in the Bible in conjunction with language of election, particularly with the root *bḥr,* "to choose": "You, Israel, *my servant,* Jacob, whom *I have chosen,* seed of Abraham, my friend; you whom I have taken from the ends of the earth and have called from its farthest corners—I said to you, 'You are *my servant. I have chosen you.* I have not rejected you'" (Isa 41:8–9).[38]

Job, then, is in an extraordinary company. That God identifies him several times as "my servant" is no small matter. He is not, like Nebuchadnezzar, an instrument used by God for punishing the elect. He is himself one of the elect, a servant of God in the company of such notables as Abraham, Moses, David, and Isaiah. Like these chosen ones, Job has a relationship with YHWH and he is singled out for special commendation by the deity.

This commendation is itself a kind of choosing. Out of all the people on earth, God chooses Job as the exemplar of righteousness, integrity, and piety: "There is no one like him on earth." God singles out Job for the Satan's attention. Whether that is a desirable thing or not is beside the point. God singles out Job for the Satan's attention and thereby God inevitably chooses Job for the test the Satan proposes. The commendation and the test are, in the logic of the book, inseparable, given the personage to whom God speaks. The Satan, the Accuser, will not take God's praise of Job at face value: "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have you not put a fence around him and around his house and around all that he has? You have blessed (*bēraktā*) the work of his hands (*maʿăśēh yādāyw*) and his possessions overflow (*pāraṣ*) in the land" (Job 1:9–10).

The Satan is describing Job's situation in terms reminiscent (again) of the stories of the patriarchs. God has blessed Job as he blessed the patriarchs, so that they (and those with whom they associate) acquire abundant wealth, wealth that "overflows" or "breaks out" across the land.[39] These blessings also echo the blessings promised in Deuteronomy to Israel itself, when they keep covenant with God. God will bless (*ûlĕbārēk*) the work of their hands (*maʿăśēh yādekā*).[40]

There are differences between Job and the patriarchs, of course. There is, for instance, no explicit call or covenant ceremony described in the book of Job. Nevertheless, the echoes of election language in the

story of Job seem to indicate that when we meet him he is already chosen, already elect, already in a covenant relationship with God.

These allusions to Job as one of the elect cluster primarily in the prose framework of the book, the story of the so-called "patient Job."[41] There are parts of the poetic core of the book, however, which also depict Job as one of the elect. Job's own self-descriptions in chapters 29 and 31 are particularly instructive.

In chapter 29, Job describes his former life, before calamity struck. He refers to his wealth only obliquely, but in terms evocative (again) of election. Describing his former existence, Job wishes for the days "when my steps were bathed in butter, and rocks (*ṣûr*) poured out for me rivers of oil (*šemen*)" (Job 29:6). The only other place in the Hebrew Bible where rocks pour out oil is in Deut 32, in an account of God's election of Israel:

> But YHWH's portion is his people; Jacob his allotted inheritance. He found him in a wasteland, in an empty, howling wilderness. He encompassed him and cared for him. He kept him as the apple of his eye.... He set him on the heights of the land and he ate the produce of the field. He nursed him with honey from the rock and oil (*šemen*) from the flinty rock (*ṣûr*). (Deut 32:9–10, 13)[42]

Job, like Israel, is beloved of God, chosen by God. Indeed, even more instructive than Job's description of his status or wealth is his description of his relationship with God: "Oh, that I were as in months gone by, as in days when God kept me; when his lamp shone upon my head and by his light I walked through darkness; when I was in the days of my prime, when the friendship of God graced my tent, when Shaddai was still with me and my children were around me" (Job 29:2–5). Job was in God's circle of intimates. God guarded him, watched over him, guided him. This is not the first time Job has spoken of his close relationship with the Almighty. In the midst of an anguished cry earlier in the dialogue, Job, like the psalmist of Ps 139, recalls the intimate care with which God "knit" (*sākak*) him together in his mother's womb (Job 10:11; Ps 139:13). God gave him life and showed him steadfast love (*ḥesed*) (Job 10:12). Job hopes against hope for a time when God might

again care for him: "You would call and I—I would answer you. You would yearn for the work of your hands" (Job 14:15).

Job is in relationship with the God of Israel. Though this relationship is not spoken of explicitly in terms of covenant, Job seems to know and follow God's *mitzvot:* "I have followed in his footsteps. I have kept his way and have not turned aside. From the commandment (*mitzvat*) of his lips I have not departed. I have treasured the words of his mouth more than my daily bread" (Job 23:11–12).[43] His long oath in chapter 31 describes in detail how he has followed God's *mitzvot,* including such biblical mandates as caring for the widow and the orphan (Job 31:16–19), dealing justly with slaves/servants (Job 31:13–15), welcoming the stranger (Job 31:32), and not committing idolatry (Job 31:26–28). There is no explicit mention of covenant in Job, but the book describes a relationship between Job and God that in many respects mirrors the covenant relationship of Israel and God. It is a relationship marked by fidelity, obedience, *ḥesed,* and a certain amount of pain.[44]

The Satan's accusation against Job—that Job fears God only because he gets rewarded for such piety—leads, of course, to the testing of Job. Will he still fear God if he loses everything? In the space of two short chapters, Job loses wealth, health, and all his children. The children die as they feast at the home of the firstborn son. Janzen argues that the feast on "his day" is a birthday celebration.[45] If so, then it is during the commemoration of the birth of the firstborn son—an event dear to the heart of any Israelite parent—that all of Job's children suddenly perish.

The author of *Jubilees,* as noted above, connects this testing of Job with the testing of Abraham in Gen 22. The texts commend themselves to such a connection. YHWH and the narrator extol Job as a God-fearer (*yĕrē' 'ĕlōhîm*) in the prologue (Job 1:1, 8; 2:3) and the Satan responds by questioning that very characteristic: "Does Job fear God for nothing?" At the end of Abraham's terrible test, God commends the same attribute in him: "Now I know that you are a God-fearer (*yĕrē' 'ĕlōhîm*), for you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me" (Gen 22:12). There are a number of other lexical connections between

the Akedah and the prologue of Job that suggest the former may have shaped the composition or editing of the latter.[46]

There are, of course, significant differences between the two stories. It is Abraham's obedience that is tested as much as (or more than) his faith.[47] Will he carry out God's unthinkable command? Job, by contrast, is not asked to participate in the destruction of his children. At the same time, Abraham does not, in the end, lose his beloved son. Job does, along with all his other children. It is not Job's obedience to a command, but Job's reaction to these losses that will be the answer to the test.

Still, the connections between the two stories run deep. Both stories describe a fearsome part of life with God. For both Abraham and Job, being chosen by God leads not to a trouble-free existence, as the Satan asserts, but to terrible tests of their faithfulness. Do they fear God only for what they get out of the relationship? Do they fear God above all else? Will they trust God despite all evidence to the contrary?

The trials of Abraham and Job, then, point to an essential feature of the doctrine of election: those chosen by God bear a special responsibility—the responsibility to abide in relationship with God, to persevere in that relationship through good times and bad, not to give up or turn away even when God appears to be other than just, loving, and faithful. Davis writes of the designation of Job as *tām:* "The person of integrity [*tummâ*] is . . . humble and resilient in faith . . . responsive to the God who is free to change the terms of the relationship and the conditions under which faith must be practiced."[48]

To say that the elect are called to persevere in relationship with God is not to say that the elect are to be quietists. Job is anything but a quietist! He, like Jacob/Israel and the nation named for him, wrestles with God. Like the psalmists and the prophets, he laments. He holds on to God with one hand and shakes his fist at God with the other:

> Am I the Sea or the Dragon, that you place a guard over me? . . . .
> What is humanity, that you magnify them,
> that you pay attention to them,
> that you visit them every morning, that you test them every moment?
> Will you not turn your gaze away from me?

> Will you not leave me alone long enough for me to swallow my spit? (Job 7:12, 17–19)[49]
>
> Though he slay me, though I have no hope,
> I will defend my ways to his face! (Job 13:15)[50]
>
> Grant me two things, then I will not hide from your face.
> Remove your hand far from me,
> and do not make dread of you terrify me.
> Then call, and I will answer. Or I will speak, and you reply to me. (Job 13:20–22)

Job, like Israel, holds on to God. He does not let God off the hook, in a kind of misguided piety; but neither does he give up on God. Beginning in chapter 7, he addresses God directly, hurling harsh accusations at God while at the same time staying in relationship with him. For this, he is commended at the end of the book by YHWH himself:

> After YHWH had spoken these words to Job, YHWH said to Eliphaz the Temanite, "I am angry with you and with your two friends, for you have not spoken to me rightly, as has my servant Job. Now take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams and go to my servant Job and offer them as a burnt offering for yourselves. Job my servant will pray for you, for I will regard him and not deal with you according to your folly, for you have not spoken to me rightly, as has my servant Job." (Job 42:7–8)

The preposition *ʾēlay* in these verses is translated by all major English translations not as "to me," but as "about me." There are two problems with that translation. The grammatical problem is that *ʾēlay* is used two other times in verse 7 with verbs of speaking, and each time it plainly means to speak "to" someone, not "about" someone. The literary problem is that Job has just admitted a few verses earlier that he spoke "without understanding, of things too wonderful for me which I did not know" (42:3); and God earlier had chastised him for "darkening counsel with words lacking knowledge" (38:1). How is it that Job is now commended for speaking "about" God rightly? It may well be that

this discrepancy is due to the combining of two different stories in the book, the story of Job the Impatient, who is chastised for his complaints, and the story of Job the Patient, who is commended in the prologue and epilogue.[51] If one takes seriously the final form of the book of Job, however, another explanation has to be found. I argue that YHWH commends Job in the end not necessarily for what he said *about* God—Job admits that he spoke without understanding—but for the fact that he spoke *to* God, something his companions, for all their pious speaking *about* God, never did. They were enthusiastic theologians; they spoke at great length *about* God. They even advised Job to pray, but they themselves never spoke directly *to* God. They never once interceded for their suffering friend. For their folly, it is Job who finally intercedes for them.

The elect, including Job, are called to a relationship with God of integrity and faithfulness. Such faithfulness entails obedience, but it also demands a certain amount of *chutzpah*.[52] It involves neither passivity, on the one hand, nor apostasy, on the other. The long history of Israel's relationship with God makes that clear. Abraham, Jacob, Moses, the prophets, the psalmists—all are bold to argue with God, to wrestle with God, while always remaining in relationship with God. Job, with his bold claims against God, claims which are spoken directly *to* God, falls into that long line of the elect.

JOB AS DYING AND RISING ISRAEL

We have spoken of Job as patriarch and of Job as one of the elect. It remains to be seen how Job fits into the pattern of death and resurrection that so informs Israel's story of election.

Let us begin with two telling passages from the *Pesiqta Rabbati*. In the first (26:7), Jeremiah comforts "Mother Zion," who is in mourning: "Your chastisement is like Job's chastisement," says the prophet. Just as Job lost sons and daughters, silver and gold, so did Zion. Just as Job was cast on a garbage heap, so has Zion become a garbage heap. Nonetheless, just as God turned back and comforted Job, so God will do for Zion as well, restoring her children and her prosperity.

The second passage, too, compares Job and Jerusalem (*Pesiq. Rab.* 29/30A:7). The homily is based on Jer 30:14: "All your lovers have forgotten you. They do not seek you out, for I have struck you with the wound of an enemy." The homily goes on to say: "The words 'the wound of an enemy (*'ôyēb*)' are to be read 'the wounds of Job (*'îyôb*).'" The rabbis then equate Jerusalem's troubles with Job's: both are attacked by Chaldeans; both are struck by fire; both are punished by the hand of God; neither is shown pity. Nevertheless, just as Job received in the end twice as much as he had lost, so Jerusalem will be given a double portion of comfort: "'Comfort, O comfort my people,' says your God" (Isa 40:1).

These two portions of the *Pesiqta Rabbati* trace the fundamental biblical story of death and resurrection in the life of Israel and in the life of one who may be seen as a personification of Israel: Job the elect, one who is chosen by God and who suffers precisely because of that chosenness; but one who is in the end restored to new life by that same God.[53]

That Job goes through a kind of death is abundantly clear in the book. "Naked I came from the womb of my mother and naked I shall return there. YHWH gave and YHWH has taken. May the name of YHWH be blessed" (Job 1:21). Job frames his immense losses in terms of birth and death, for—as most scholars note—"there" (*šāmâ*) cannot, of course, be his mother's womb, but the womb of earth; that is, the grave. Job uses the same word (*šām*) for the grave in his first speech of the dialogue, the curse on the day of his birth: "*There* the wicked cease from turmoil, and *there* rest those whose strength is gone .... Small and great are *there,* and the slave is free of his master" (Job 3:17, 19).

Intermittently through the dialogue, Job continues to wish for the grave and/or describes his existence as though he were already there:

> My body is clothed with maggots and dust;
> my skin scabs over, then oozes again.
> My days pass faster than a weaver's shuttle;
> they come to an end without hope. (Job 7:5–6)

> Why did you bring me out from the womb?
> Would that I had died and no eye had seen me.

> Would that I were as if I had never been,
> carried straight from womb to tomb. (Job 10:18–19)
>
> My spirit is broken; my days are extinguished.
> The graveyard waits for me. (Job 17:1)

Job has lost everything. Death engulfs his life, and he is left naked, bitter, and despairing. Loss of family and possessions, physical affliction, the betrayal of friends, the (perceived) betrayal of God—all these lead Job into a kind of death, out of which he laments as bitterly as Zion bereft of her children.

And yet, there are moments in Job's speeches of inexplicable hope, or at least something akin to hope.[54] One of those moments is particularly striking, as in it Sheol plays a strangely positive role:

> O that you would hide me in Sheol,
> that you would conceal me until your anger has passed,
> that you would appoint for me a time and then remember me!
> If a man dies, will he live again?
> All the days of my service I would wait until my release comes.
> You would call and I would answer you;
> you would yearn for the work of your hands. (Job 14:13–15)

This is a short-lived hope. A few verses later, Job bluntly says, "Water wears away stone, and torrents wash away soil. So you destroy a man's hope" (Job 14:19). Still, that Job can imagine a time, in or beyond the grave, when God might "remember" (*zākar*) him, is testament to a hope (however faint) that defies the evidence of his present circumstances. As it turns out, Job's hope is fulfilled. As with Noah, that other great paragon of righteousness, God's "remembering" of Job will lead to new life and a renewed relationship (Gen 8:1).[55]

The most famous expression of hope in Job's speeches is also one of the most difficult to translate. "I know that my Redeemer lives and at the last he will stand upon the dust," declares Job (Job 19:25). What follows in verses 26–27 has been taken by some scholars as a nascent belief in resurrection; by others as a desperate wish for vindication in

this life. While the latter seems more likely in the context of the book, what is clear is that Job hopes to see God. "After my skin has been destroyed, in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself. My eyes will see, and not another's" (Job 19:26–27a).[56] Again, though not in any way that he expected, his hope is fulfilled. After God speaks from the whirlwind, Job confesses, "By the hearing of the ear I had heard of you, but now my eyes see you" (Job 42:5).

In what way has he "seen" God in the whirlwind speeches? He has seen God's vibrant, wild, and beautiful creation, in which creatures indifferent and inaccessible to humanity are given a place in God's world and allowed to be what God has created them to be. He has seen the primal, inexorable power of procreation active in the world, contrary to his own curse on creation in chapter 3. He has seen God's obvious pride and delight in exactly those forces outside of humanity's control: the sea, the wild animals, Leviathan.[57] He has seen, in other words, life—life in all its many and varied forms, created and sustained by God.

This response by God to Job's situation has given rise to much discontent on the part of readers, and to doubts about the literary integrity of the book.[58] Nevertheless, in the final form of the book, it is clear that the divine speeches lead to a transformation in Job. He proclaims that he has seen God; he acknowledges that he did not speak with understanding; he offers sacrifices for his distinctly unhelpful friends. Most strikingly, he chooses to live again. Such might not have been the case, but in the end Job (and his wife) choose to live again. That is, they have more children, even knowing the pain that such an act entails.[59] Job chooses to live again, and to live in such a way that he mirrors God's way of ordering the world. He gives his daughters names to celebrate their incomparable beauty and he gives them an inheritance along with their brothers (Job 42:14–15). Davis writes of these verses:

> The anxious patriarch who once feared the possibility of his children's sin now takes revolutionary delight in their beauty. These final odd details are far from gratuitous—or, in a deeper sense, they are entirely gratuitous, and that is exactly the point. In this unconventional style of parenting we see how deeply Job has comprehended and adopted as his own the principle that underlies God's *mišpāṭ:* the freely bestowed

> delight that is in fact the highest form of causality in the universe, the generosity that brings another into free being.[60]

Job chooses to live again. In the speeches from the whirlwind, God calls him out of his death-like existence into life again, with all of its risks and rewards. Such renewed life after unfathomable suffering can legitimately be spoken of in terms of resurrection.[61] Job's story participates in that fundamental biblical movement from death to resurrection. To be sure, the book does not speak explicitly of resurrection from the dead, as the later rabbis (and Christians) understood resurrection. Nevertheless, it speaks of reversal and restoration, "the possibility . . . of redemption after unspeakable tragedy."[62]

Job dies "old and full of days," surrounded by four generations of descendants. His earlier visions of a gloomy end in Sheol are not fulfilled. On the contrary, he is among those who die contented after a long and fulfilling life. In this, too, he mirrors the elect. Abraham and Isaac die "old and full of days." Jacob dies surrounded by his descendants. Such fortunate deaths are signs of God's favor.

Job's story of new life after terrible tragedy, a story that mirrors Israel's own, contributes to that trajectory in the Hebrew Bible that eventually leads to the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. Levenson writes of the restoration of Job as envisioned by his friends; though not resurrection of the dead, "[i]t is a reversal nonetheless, the replacement of despair with hope, of gloom with shining light. It was such a reversal in the same direction, a restoration in the same direction, that the rabbis (along with their Pharisaic antecedents and Christian contemporaries) expected in the future resurrection of the dead."[63]

Given Job's story and the resonance it must have had with those steeped in the biblical tradition, it is perhaps not surprising that the LXX translator(s) of Job added this detail to the end of the book: "And Job died, old and full of days. *And it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up.*"

According to this ending, Job—prototype of Israel, chosen of God—will, like Israel, be drawn finally out of death into life. Such an interpretation is true not only to this particular story of Job but also to the larger biblical narrative of which it is a part. It is not an easy thing

to be one of the elect, to be sure. With election come severe trials, according to Job and to the whole biblical tradition. Nonetheless, with election comes also a relationship with the God of Israel; and that God—according to the faith communities born out of the biblical tradition—is a God of life, who is faithful even until death, and beyond.

NOTES

I have learned an inestimable amount—about the Bible, about theology, about teaching— from my former teacher and advisor, Jon Levenson. In particular, his erudite and profound exploration of themes of death and resurrection in the Hebrew Bible has informed my own reading of the biblical texts, including the book of Job. I count myself very fortunate to have been among his students, for whom he is not only a superb teacher, but also a wise and generous mentor. I am privileged to be among those offering essays in honor of him.

1. All translations of the biblical text are the author's, unless otherwise noted. The niphal of *brk* can also be translated as a reflexive: "And by you all the families of the earth will bless themselves." For a fuller explication of the theological implications of each translation, see Joel Kaminsky, *Yet I Loved Jacob: Reclaiming the Biblical Concept of Election* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2007), 82–85.

2. See Gen 18:17–19; Exod 19:5–6; Isa 2:2–4, 43:10, 60:3.

3. Jon Levenson, "The Universal Horizon of Biblical Particularism," in *Ethnicity and the Bible* (ed. M.G. Brett; Leiden: Brill, 1996), 156.

4. Deut 7:7–8 is a focal text for the theme of God's love for Israel. Levenson speaks of the text as describing "an affair of the heart" (ibid.).

5. Jon Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 232.

6. The exception, of course, is Abel, who does not go through a "near death" but a real death. Levenson argues that Seth is to be understood in the ancient Israelite narrative as "Abel redivivus, the slain son restored to his parents . . . The death of the beloved son, even when it is not averted, can still be reversed." (*Death and Resurrection*, 78).

7. Ibid., 59.

8. Jon D. Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 131.

9. Levenson, *Death and Resurrection*, 67.

10. Isa 43:14–21, 51:9–11.

11. Exod 4:22–23; 19:3–6; Lev 26:42–45; Deut 7:7–8; Josh 24:2–13; Ps 105; Isa 41:8–10; 44:1–3, 21–28; 45:1–7; Jer 33:23–26; Ezek 37:11–28; Amos 3:1–2.

12. R. W. L. Moberly, *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 84–85. Emphasis added.

13. Notice the parallel phrase in 1 Kgs 5:10, where Solomon's wisdom is "greater than the wisdom of all the sons of the East." In this passage, of course, Solomon cannot be included in the "sons of the East." It is unclear whether Job is to be so designated.

14. The name Uz appears in genealogies of Esau (Gen 36:28; 1 Chr 1:42) and is connected with Edom/Esau also in Lam 4:21.

15. Job 42:17b–17c (LXX).

16. Judith R. Baskin, *Pharaoh's Counsellors: Job, Jethro, and Balaam in Rabbinic and Patristic Tradition* (BJS 47; Chico, Cal.: Scholars Press, 1983), 32–43. Manlio Simonetti and Marco Conti, eds., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Job* (ACCS 6; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2006), xviii, 1–2. Some patristic writers described Job as a type of the crucified and risen Christ (idem., 103–4, 159–60).

17. Gregory the Great, *Moralia on Job: Preface § 5*. Cited in Baskin, 35.

18. *b. B. Bat.* 15a. See also *b. Soṭah* 35a.

19. *b. Soṭah* 11a, *b. Sanh.* 106a, *Exod. Rab.* 1:9. In this tradition, Job is not considered righteous. He is punished because he does not speak up to defend the Israelites from Pharaoh's plans to destroy them.

20. *S. ʿOlam Rab.* 21; *b. B. Bat.* 15b. Cf. *Deut. Rab.* 2:4. The other Gentile prophets are Balaam and his father as well as Job's four interlocutors: Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar, and Elihu.

21. *b. B. Bat.* 15a. See also *j. Soṭah* 20c and *Gen. Rab.* 57:4.

22. *b. B. Bat.* 15b.

23. *b. Ber.* 17a.

24. *b. B. Bat.* 16a.

25. *Pesiq. Rab.* 47:3. For other rabbinic comparisons of Job with Abraham, see *Gen. Rab.* 49:9; 57:4.

26. *Gen. Rab.* 57:4

27. *b. B. Bat.* 15b. See also the *Testament of Job* 1:5–6 and *Gen. Rab.* 19:12.

28. The rabbis do not make this connection between Esau and Job, perhaps, as Baskin argues, because of the association in rabbinic times of Esau/Edom with Rome (Baskin, 29).

29. For a summary of many of these parallels, see Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job* (trans. H. Knight; London: Thomas Nelson, 1967), xx–xxi. I have added several parallels to Dhorme's list.

30. The MT of Gen 25:8 (Abraham's death) lacks the word *yāmîm*, "days," though the word (or its equivalent) appears in some Hebrew manuscripts, as well as in the LXX, the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Targums, and the Peshitta. The phrase is used only of Abraham, Isaac, Job, and David (1 Chr 23:1).

31. Being a God-fearer, of course, is not an unusual designation in the Hebrew Bible. Still, given the other parallels between the patriarchs and Job, it bears mentioning, especially because the particular phrase *yĕrē' 'ĕlōhîm*, which occurs in Gen 22:12 and Job 1:1, 8 and 2:3, is not common. For more on connections between Gen 22 and Job, see below.

32. Ellen F. Davis describes the literary and theological connections between Jacob and Job, including this designation of them as *tām*, in "Job and Jacob: The Integrity of Faith," in *The Whirlwind: Essays on Job, Hermeneutics, and Theology in Memory of Jane Morse* (ed. S. L. Cook et al.; New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 100–20. Note that *tām* and its cognates also occur in covenantal contexts (Gen 17:1; Deut 18:13).

33. See also Gen 17:1, 28:3, 35:11, 43:14, 48:3, 49:25; Job 5:17; 6:4, 14; 8:3, 5; 13:3, etc. The name Shaddai is used twenty-three times in the book of Job. The name El is used fifty-five times. The name YHWH is used in the prologue, epilogue, and divine speeches of Job. For more on that topic, see below.

34. I am agreeing here with the majority of scholars who date Job no earlier than the Babylonian exile. For a discussion of scholarship on the dating of Job, see my book *Out of the Whirlwind: Creation Theology in the Book of Job* (HTS 61; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008), 13–20.

35. See Levenson's discussion of *Jubilees* and the prologue of Job in *Death and Resurrection*, 177–78.

36. The name YHWH does appear once in the poetic dialogue, at 12:9, where it echoes a phrase from Isa 41:20.

37. See, among many examples, Gen 26:24; Lev 25:42; Num 12:7–8; 2 Sam 3:18; 1 Kgs 11:32–38; 2 Kgs 9:7; Isa 20:3; Ezek 34:23–24; and, of course, the "servant songs" in Isa 42, 49, 50, and 52–53.

38. For more examples of *'abdî* and *bḥr* used together, see 1 Kgs 11:34; Pss 78:70, 105:26; Isa 42:1, 43:10, 44:1–2, 65:9; Hag 2:23. Note that *bḥr* is used often by itself in contexts of election, to speak of God's "choosing" of Israel or of specific individuals from Israel. See, for example, Deut 7:6–7.

39. The instances of God blessing (*brk*) the patriarchs are too numerous to list. Note, however, the use of *prṣ* to speak of abundant wealth in Gen 28:14 (Jacob), 30:30 (Laban, because of his association with Jacob), and 30:43 (Jacob).

40. Deut. 28:12; cf. 28:8. For a discussion of the elements of covenant found in the book of Job, see Max Rogland, "The Covenant in the Book of Job," *CTR* 7 (Fall 2009): 49–62.

41. For a discussion of the two primary strata of the book discerned by many scholars (the original folktale of a "patient Job" and the addition of a story of an "impatient Job"), see the seminal study by H. L. Ginsberg, "Job the Patient and Job the Impatient," *Conservative Judaism* 21 (1967): 12–28.

42. Note that both passages also refer to *ḥem'â* ("curds, butter"), as a sign of blessing (Deut 32:14; Job 29:6).

43. I follow the NIV and the Tanakh in translating "my portion" as "my daily bread."

44. It is important to note that the suffering Job undergoes is not a result of sin. He does not break the covenant, as Israel is accused of doing. Indeed, God notes that "there is no one like him on earth" (Job 1:8). The book of Job is not Deuteronomistic. It explores, instead, the question of undeserved suffering, which, it may be argued, is also portrayed in other biblical stories of the elect (Abraham, Joseph).

45. J. Gerald Janzen, *Job* (IBC; Atlanta: John Knox, 1985), 36. Janzen connects *yômô* in Job 1:4, describing the sons' celebrations, with the same word in 3:1, the latter designating the day of Job's birth.

46. See Victoria Hoffer, "Illusion, Allusion, and Literary Artifice in the Frame Narrative of Job," in *The Whirlwind*, 84–99. Besides *yĕrē' 'ĕlōhîm*, the other verbal connections Hoffer lists are: the mention of Uz (Job 1:1; Gen 22:21); *hiškîm babōqer* "rise early in the morning" (Job 1:5; Gen 22:3); *šālaḥ yād* "stretch out a hand" (Job 1:11, 12; 2:5; Gen 22:10, 12); *nāśā' 'ênayîm mērāḥôq* "raise eyes from a distance" (Job 2:12; Gen 22:4).

47. Levenson makes this point strongly in *Death and Resurrection*, 125–42.

48. Davis, "Job and Jacob," 105.

49. For a similar sentiment, see Ps 39:10–13.

50. I am reading here the *ketib* (*lō'*) rather than the *qere* (*lô*). The NIV offers the alternate reading: "Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face." The point is much the same in either reading: Job still clings to the God who has become, in his estimation, his enemy.

51. See Ginsberg, "Job the Patient."

52. Levenson speaks eloquently of this "dialectical theology" of the Hebrew Bible, in which "both arguing with God and obeying him can be central spiritual acts, although when to do which remains necessarily unclear." See *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (2nd ed.; Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994), 153.

53. Other scholars discern this correlation between Job and Israel. Note the comment by Ellen Davis: "Job is Israel in exile: radically alienated from God, and yet unable to separate himself from this God who seems bent on destroying him" ("Job and Jacob," 108). I am sympathetic to the argument that the book of Job was written as a response to the Babylonian exile, though of course there are

many times of suffering in the history of Israel to which Job could have been a response.

54. Here I want to nuance Levenson's characterization of Job's view in the dialogue. He says that Job, unlike his friends, "despair[s] of ultimate restoration," that his "lapse" lies in "his failure to see that the hellish suffering of his deathlike condition was not God's last word" (*Resurrection and Restoration*, 71). While this is certainly true of most of Job's speeches, there are moments when Job at least approaches a sense that there may be something more, something for which to hope. This hope is not for an afterlife, but for vindication and for God's renewed care in this life.

55. Note that Job and Noah (along with Daniel/Danel) are cited by Ezekiel as exemplars of righteousness (Ezek 14:14, 20). This is taken by most scholars as evidence of a well-known ANE folktale of Job, which was the basis for the prose framework of the book.

56. The phrase in 26a is difficult to translate, in part because the verb is 3cp and there is no subject for it. Most translators understand it as a passive verb, as do I. It is also unclear what "from/in my flesh" means.

57. For much more on this interpretation of the divine speeches, and how they provide a response to Job's situation and speeches, see my book *Out of the Whirlwind*, 63–127.

58. S. B. Freehof's statement about the divine speeches nicely summarizes the problem: "Job cries, 'I am innocent.' And God responds, 'You are ignorant.' The answer seems not only irrelevant but even unfeeling and heartless." See S. B. Freehof, *Book of Job* (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1958), 236.

59. Though the "replacement" of the old set of children with the new set seems terribly inadequate to today's audience, another reading of the epilogue is possible. I find Ellen Davis's reading particularly edifying. She writes: "This book is not about justifying God's actions; it is about Job's transformation. It is useless to ask how much (or how little) it costs God to give more children. The real question is how much it costs Job to become a father again." (Ellen Davis, *Getting Involved with God: Rediscovering the Old Testament* [Lanham, Maryland: Cowley, 2001], 142.)

60. Davis, "Job and Jacob," 120.

61. Note the rabbinic midrash that Job "lived to see a new world" (*Gen. Rab.* 30:8).

62. Levenson, *Resurrection and Restoration*, 80.

63. Ibid., 70.